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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND AFERNANDEZ,
IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
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SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Jordan, Syria/Libya, Arab
Parliament Conference, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestinian Territories
(11/3-5)

11. Summary: Syrian papers reported that President Asad received a letter on Saturday (11/4) from King Abdullah II, focusing on regional developments and ties between Syria and Jordan. The letter was conveyed by Abdul Hadi Majali, Speaker of the Jordanian Parliament and Chairman of the Interim Arab Parliament, who met with President Asad on November 4. Papers also reported Foreign Minister Walid al-Mouallem's visit to Tripoli, Libya, carrying a message from President Asad to Colonel Moamar Qaddafi. The message focused on bilateral relations and recent regional developments.

Papers also reported the meeting of the Interim Arab Parliament in Damascus on November 4, featuring its final statement denouncing the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and calling for an immediate release of members of the Palestinian government and the Palestinian Speaker from Israeli jails, as well as the freeing of other Arab and Palestinian prisoners. The statement renewed condemnation of Israeli aggression against Lebanese territory and the need for full Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon, including Shebaa Farms and Kfar Shouba.
End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad sends a message to Libyan President al-Gadafi carried by Foreign Minister al-Mouallem, receives a message from King Abdullah II of Jordan, and reviews latest developments in the Palestinian and Iraqi arenas with Speaker of Jordanian Parliament al-Majali" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/5)

"Arab Parliamentarians call for an unconditional timetable for ending the occupation of Iraq. Al-Saqer, Speaker of the Arab Interim Parliament, voices full solidarity with Syria. Al-Abrach, Speaker of the Syrian People's Assembly: The Damascus meeting represents a new era. Moussa, Arab league SecGen: The Damascus conference deepens dialogue and efforts to boost reforms" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/5)

"German Chancellor Merkel to British Premier Blair: Syria is an important regional player" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 11/3)

"The Lebanese government authorizes German naval forces to monitor all of the Lebanese coast. Lebanese Foreign Minister Saloukh reiterates: Larsen's statement is untrue. Aoun rejects conditions of the February 14 group for change of government" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 11/5)

"Mounting resentment of US interference in Lebanese affairs.

General Aoun: Changing the government is a Lebanese demand.... External support does not give it legitimacy" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/4)

"Palestinian President Abbas calls for emergency UN Security Council session. Over 43 Palestinians martyred, 225 injured, in 4th day of the Israeli massacre against Gaza" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/5)

"CIA Director John Negroponte pays a surprise visit to Baghdad and confers with Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki. Killing of 11 US soldiers in Iraq within two days" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/4)

"International opinion poll: Bush threatens world peace. Observers: The year of Democrats has started. Republicans launch a final rescue campaign" (Government-owned Tishreen, 11/4)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Will Rice Recognize Facts?"

Izz-al-Din al-Darwish, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (11/2): "Condoleezza Rice made a statement about possible assassinations in Lebanon and a conspiracy against the Al-Saniora government and accused Syria.

"These American statements are not surprising in terms of timing and objective, at least to those who are following Lebanese developments and the repercussions of the recent Israeli aggression on Lebanon. Since the end of that aggression -- which ended with a clear defeat for Israel and, consequently, for the US Administration -- Secretary Rice has been moving in and around the region to create new hotbeds

of tension and rekindle the existing ones. The evidence is what has happened in the occupied Palestinian territories and also in Lebanon."

"Washington wants the Lebanese to keep silent and accept, without discussion, what the Americans and the Israelis offer them.... Americans are telling the Lebanese something like this: Leave the issues of the border, the sea, the crossings, the airport, and the internal security to us; have full confidence in the February 14 group; keep away from the national resistance and its allies; and, most importantly, keep away from Syria. Then, you will win our approval and that of Israel.

"But Secretary Rice has forgotten that Lebanon is not only the February 14 group, and the Lebanese have much stronger nationalist and Arab sentiments than she thinks, and that most of them are ready to sacrifice even their lives for the sake of Lebanon's pride and dignity."

"A Lost Will For Peace"

Muhammad Ali Buza, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (11/3): "The negative US position toward Spain's call for a credible conference for peace in the Middle East did not come as a surprise....

"Washington has lost its role credibility.... Along with the Israeli ally and through unlimited support for it, Washington deliberately killed and buried the peace process and permitted Tel Aviv alone to free itself from any obligations or requirements resulting or which might result from this process.... It preferred to maintain a unilateral hold on the file of the crisis and the keys to its solution. Washington does not want any party to disturb it, embarrass it, or act outside its umbrella, which is designed exclusively to sponsor Israel and dictate peace on Israel's conditions and terms -- something that conflicts with UN resolutions and the elements of a just and comprehensive peace....

"The United States has turned into a main party to the conflict and a full partner of Israel in its aggression, usurpation of Arab land, challenge to international law, and rejection of peace.... It is impossible for the United States to be a force for aggression, occupation, and intimidation and, at the same time, a sponsor and guarantor of peace in the Middle East or anywhere else in the world...."

"A Plan that is Doomed to Failure"

Adnan Ali, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (11/3): "President Bush's new plan in Iraq, which is based on getting the Iraqi government more involved in the security effort so as to blame it for the failures and to minimize losses among American troops, does not amount to a strategic change placing Iraq on a clear course that will end with the departure of the occupation forces and the achievement of a genuine political reconciliation among the Iraqi people. This is why this plan is not likely to achieve tangible results that will save the Bush administration from its crisis and rescue the Iraqi people from the cycle of violence and the specter of civil war which is looming as a result of stupid or deliberate policies by the occupation forces...."

"Three years after its unjust war on Iraq, the Bush administration has not drawn the necessary conclusions, and it still turns to lies, arrogance, and stupidity...."

Corbin